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**International Conference on Chemicals Management**

**Third session**

Nairobi, 17–21 September 2012

Item 4 (e) of the provisional agenda\*

**Implementation of the Strategic Approach to  
International Chemicals Management:  
emerging policy issues**

**New nominations of emerging policy issues**

**Note by the secretariat**

**I. Introduction**

1. One of the functions of the International Conference on Chemicals Management, as set out in paragraph 24 (j) of the Overarching Policy Strategy of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management, is to focus attention and call for appropriate action on emerging policy issues as they arise and to forge consensus on priorities for cooperative action.
2. At its second session, held in Geneva from 11 to 15 May 2009, the Conference adopted resolution II/4 on emerging policy issues. The annex to that resolution sets out modalities for considering emerging policy issues. The process is to be open and transparent, facilitated by the secretariat, and provide for the participation of all stakeholders.
3. In accordance with the above-mentioned modalities, two issues were nominated for consideration at the Conference's third session: international cooperation to promote awareness, understanding and action in respect of endocrine-disrupting chemicals; and environmentally persistent pharmaceutical pollutants (see sect. III below).
4. At its first meeting, held in Belgrade from 15 to 18 November 2011, the Open-ended Working Group of the Conference, pursuant to its functions as set out in paragraph 2 (a) of resolution II/6, considered the two nominated issues and adopted decision OEWG.1/4 A on endocrine-disrupting chemicals and decision OEWG.1/4 B on environmentally persistent pharmaceutical pollutants (see annex).
5. With respect to endocrine-disrupting chemicals, while the Working Group was unable to reach consensus on the inclusion of the issue in the provisional agenda for the third session of the Conference, it agreed to forward decision OEWG.1/4 A to the Conference for its consideration, with text relating to the areas on which consensus could not be reached enclosed in square brackets.
6. The actions set out in the proposal considered by the Working Group on international cooperation to promote awareness, understanding and action in respect of endocrine-disrupting chemicals can be summarized as follows:
  - (a) Providing up-to-date information and scientific expert advice to policymakers and others responsible for chemicals risk management to assist them in identifying and recommending

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\* SAICM/ICCM.3/1.

potential measures that can contribute to reducing exposure to and the effects of endocrine-disrupting chemicals;

(b) Raising awareness and facilitating information exchange and networking;

(c) Providing international support to build capacity, in particular in developing countries and countries with economies in transition, to assess issues pertaining to endocrine-disrupting chemicals;

(d) Creating an international network of scientists, risk managers and others who are particularly involved in issues pertaining to endocrine-disrupting chemicals so as to facilitate information exchange, establish discussion forums and provide mutual support in research and advice on the translation of research results into action to control such chemicals.

7. With respect to environmentally persistent pharmaceutical pollutants, in its decision OEWG.1/4 B the Working Group considered that some of the activities set out in the proposal did not meet the criteria for the issue to be considered to be an emerging policy issue. The Working Group recognized, however, the merit of further consideration of the issue by the Conference following its third session and encouraged the proponent to develop the proposal further.

### **Possible action by the Conference**

8. Accordingly, the Conference may wish to consider a single new emerging policy issue, taking into account the current work on existing emerging policy issues and the need to complete that work and the relevance of the issue to achieving the goal that by 2020 chemicals are used and produced in ways that lead to the minimization of significant adverse effects on human health and the environment.

9. The Conference may wish:

(a) To review and consider the decisions of the Open-ended Working Group;

(b) To review the proposal on international cooperation to promote awareness, understanding and action in respect of endocrine-disrupting chemicals and consider the cooperative actions proposed therein;

(c) To adopt the proposal for international cooperation to promote awareness, understanding and action in respect of endocrine-disrupting chemicals as a new emerging policy issue of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management.

## **II. Modalities for considering emerging policy issues**

10. The definition of an emerging policy issue in the context of the Strategic Approach is contained in the annex to resolution II/4, which sets out the process for the consideration of emerging policy issues by the Conference. Accordingly, an emerging policy issue is defined as an issue involving any phase in the life cycle of chemicals that, first, has not been generally recognized, has not been sufficiently addressed or arises from the current level of scientific information and, second, may have significant adverse effects on human health and/or the environment.

11. In accordance with the above-mentioned modalities, nominations of new emerging policy issues must be submitted at least 18 months in advance of the session of the Conference at which they are to be considered. The deadline for the nomination of issues for consideration at the third session of the Conference was set at 30 November 2010. The modalities also stipulate that initial information submitted in support of an issue should demonstrate why it should be considered to be an emerging policy issue and should include a description of proposed actions for making progress on the issue. Possible actions are suggested in paragraph 4 (b) of the annex to resolution II/4.

12. Following the second session of the Conference, the secretariat prepared guidance, including details of the nomination procedures, a questionnaire to be used in nominating emerging policy issues and an overview of the steps to follow by the Conference in its consideration of emerging policy issues.

13. In nominating an emerging policy issue, a proponent is to complete a questionnaire that includes the criteria listed in paragraph 2 (b) of the annex to resolution II/4. This encompasses:

(a) Magnitude of the problem and its impact on human health or the environment, taking into account vulnerable subpopulations and any toxicological and exposure data gaps;

(b) Extent to which the issue is being addressed by other bodies, particularly at the international level, and how it is related to, complements, or does not duplicate such work;

- (c) Existing knowledge and perceived gaps in understanding about the issue;
- (d) Extent to which the issue is of a cross-cutting nature;
- (e) Information on the anticipated deliverables from action on the issue.

### III. Nominated new emerging policy issues

14. Two issues were nominated for consideration as new emerging policy issues at the third session of the Conference:

- (a) International cooperation to promote awareness, understanding and action in respect of endocrine-disrupting chemicals (United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP));
- (b) Environmentally persistent pharmaceutical pollutants (International Society of Doctors for the Environment).

15. Each proponent completed a questionnaire on the issue that it had nominated, setting out why it should be considered to be an emerging policy issue. The questionnaire included a short description of each issue, explaining how in the proponent's view it met the definition of an emerging policy issue, and provided information meant to facilitate assessment of the issue against the criteria set out in paragraph 2 (b) of the annex to resolution II/4. Each submission also described the proposed cooperative actions, or options for such actions, to be considered in moving forward on the nominated emerging policy issue, including a rationale for how the proposed actions would address the nominated issue.

16. The secretariat ensured that the nominations matched the agreed definition and criteria and Strategic Approach stakeholders were invited to submit comments on the nominations by 30 April 2011. Comments were received from three Governments (Madagascar, Mexico and the United States of America), one intergovernmental organization (the World Health Organization (WHO)) and one non-governmental organization (the International POPs Elimination Network), and were posted on the Strategic Approach website at [www.saicm.org](http://www.saicm.org).

17. On endocrine-disrupting chemicals, the comments received included the following suggestions:

- (a) That the proposed cooperative action should be revised to reflect the outcomes of activities already in place, more recent scientific findings and the exchange of good examples in regulatory, research support and financial structures;
- (b) That a link could be made between the proposal and the Overarching Policy Strategy;
- (c) That the magnitude of the problem and its impact on children's vulnerability needed to be refined to reflect the particularities of their vulnerability more accurately;
- (d) That consideration should be given to updating the global assessment of the state-of-the-science of endocrine disruptors prepared by an expert group on behalf of WHO and UNEP, which would contain updated information on human health issues (led by WHO), environmental issues (led by UNEP) and information about exposure (jointly led by both organizations).

18. On environmentally persistent pharmaceutical pollutants, the comments received included the following suggestions:

- (a) That the issue should be included as an emerging policy issue;
- (b) That consideration should be given to the levels at which such pharmaceuticals occur in environmental media and to some of the less-known factors that the proposal discussed (e.g., cumulative effects of exposure to mixtures and unintended exposures of vulnerable or sensitive populations);
- (c) That attention should be paid to the separate process for adding activities to the Global Plan of Action;
- (d) That consideration should be given to a 2011 WHO technical report on pharmaceuticals in drinking water.

19. Two Governments commented in general on both proposals, one expressing support for further consideration by the Conference, the other advocating that, as resources were currently limited, it would be more appropriate to focus on continuing and completing work on existing emerging policy issues than to take up new ones.

20. The proponents reviewed the comments and revised the submissions as appropriate. Stakeholders discussed both nominated issues during Strategic Approach regional meetings held in 2011, and both were endorsed at the African and the Latin American and Caribbean meetings. Stakeholders at the Central and Eastern European regional meeting reserved their position pending discussions with other constituencies, but said that they were not opposed in principle to discussing the issues at the first meeting of the Open-ended Working Group and noted that endocrine-disrupting chemicals were of concern. Some said that priority should be accorded to follow-up work on the four emerging policy issues identified by the Conference at its second session. It was suggested that consideration of emerging policy issues was one of a number of important measures for Strategic Approach implementation and that new emerging policy issues should be selected with caution given the resource demands of other Strategic Approach initiatives.

21. Information on the two nominated new emerging policy issues was provided at the technical briefing session held on 14 November 2011, immediately before the first meeting of the Open-ended Working Group. Following the Open-ended Working Group's consideration of the two proposals for new nominated emerging policy issues, the Working Group adopted decision OEWG.1/4 A on endocrine-disrupting chemicals and decision OEWG.1/4 B on environmentally persistent pharmaceutical pollutants.

22. The final version of the submission on endocrine-disrupting chemicals is available in document SAICM/ICCM.3/INF/23.

## Annex

### Decision OEWG.1/4: New emerging policy issues

#### A

#### Endocrine-disrupting chemicals

*The Open-ended Working Group,*

*Mindful* of the overarching goal of the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, as set out in paragraph 23, of ensuring that by 2020 chemicals are produced and used in ways that minimize significant adverse impacts on the environment and human health,<sup>1</sup>

*Mindful also* of the non-binding, voluntary and multi-stakeholder nature of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management,

*Recognizing* the potential adverse effects of endocrine disruptors on human health and the environment,

*Recognizing also* the need to protect humans, and ecosystems and their constituent parts that are especially vulnerable, as set forth in, among others, paragraph 14 (b) of the Overarching Policy Strategy of the Strategic Approach,

*Considering* the particular needs of developing countries and countries with economies in transition,

*Recognizing* the continuing efforts by Strategic Approach stakeholders, including intergovernmental organizations and civil society, the scientific community and representatives of public interest non-governmental organizations, trade unions and the health sector,

*Having considered* the proposal for endocrine-disrupting chemicals as a new emerging policy issue:

1. *[Agrees* that the proposal meets the criteria for an emerging policy issue;]
2. *Considers* that information dissemination and awareness-raising are particularly relevant;
3. *Recognizes* the current difficulties faced by some countries in mobilizing the resources required to tackle endocrine-disrupting chemicals as an emerging policy issue;
4. *[Recognizes* the merit of further discussions at the third session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management, and recommends that the Conference consider][*Encourages* the proponent to consider] the options contained in paragraph 5 of the note by the secretariat on nominated new emerging policy issues<sup>2</sup> in the light of work being undertaken by Strategic Approach stakeholders.

#### B

#### Environmentally persistent pharmaceutical pollutants

*The Open-ended Working Group*

1. *Considers* that some of the activities set out in the current proposal for environmentally persistent pharmaceutical pollutants as a new emerging policy issue did not meet the criteria for the issue to be considered to be an emerging policy issue,

2. *Recognizes* the merit of further consideration of the issue by the International Conference on Chemicals Management, following its third session, and encourages the proponent to develop the proposal further.

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1 *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August–4 September 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.II.A.1 and corrigendum), chap. I, resolution 2, annex.

2 SAICM/OEWG.1/14.